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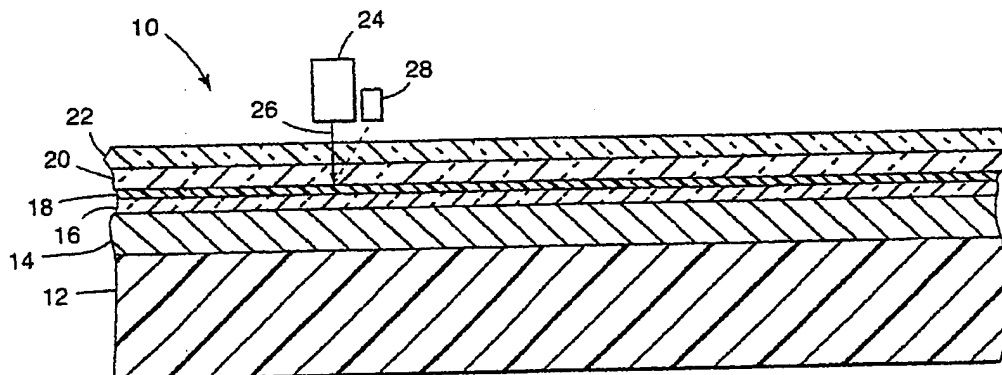
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(54) Title: REWRITABLE OPTICAL DATA STORAGE DISK HAVING ENHANCED FLATNESS



(57) Abstract: A rewritable optical recording disk has an increased thickness that is greater than or equal to approximately 1.5 mm. In particular, the disk may have a substrate with a thickness that is greater than or equal to approximately 2.3 mm and less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm. The increased thickness of the substrate enhances the flatness of the recording disk relative to a recording plane. In particular, the increased thickness reduces process-induced surface variations such as warpage and tilt, and provides the disk with increased stiffness to resist deflection during use. The enhanced flatness enables data to be recorded on the disk in a consistent manner with greater spatial densities using techniques such as near-field, air-incident recording. The resulting disk thereby yields greater spatial density and data storage capacity.

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REWRITABLE OPTICAL DATA STORAGE DISK HAVING ENHANCED FLATNESS

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to rewritable optical data storage media including magneto-optic disks useful in near-field, air-incident recording applications.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In magneto-optic recording, data is represented as a magnetized domain on a magnetizable recording medium such as a disk. Each domain is a stable magnetizable data site representative of a data bit. Data is written to the medium by applying a focused beam of high intensity light in the presence of a magnetic field. The disk typically includes a substrate, a magneto-optic recording layer, a reflective layer, and two or more dielectric layers.

In substrate-incident recording, the beam passes through the substrate before it reaches the recording layer. The reflective layer in a substrate-incident recording medium is formed on a side of the recording layer opposite the substrate. The reflective layer reflects the beam back to the recording layer, increasing overall exposure and absorption.

In near-field, air-incident recording, the beam does not pass through the substrate. Instead, the beam is incident on the recording layer from a side of the disk opposite the substrate. In an air-incident recording medium, the reflective layer is formed adjacent the substrate. A solid immersion lens (SIL) can be used to transmit the beam across an extremely thin air gap, and through the top of the recording medium to the recording layer. The SIL can be integrated with a flying magnetic head assembly. The air gap forms a bearing over which the flying head rides during operation. For near-field recording, the thickness of the air gap is less than one wavelength of the recording beam. Transmission of the beam is accomplished by a technique known as evanescent coupling.

For either substrate-incident or air-incident recording, the recording beam heats a localized area of the recording medium above its Curie temperature to form a magnetizable domain. The domain is allowed to cool in the presence of a magnetic field. The magnetic field overcomes the demagnetizing field of the perpendicular anisotropy recording medium, causing the localized domain to acquire a particular magnetization. The direction of the magnetic field and the resulting magnetization determine the data represented at the domain.

With beam modulation recording techniques, the magnetic field is maintained in a given direction for a period of time as the beam power is selectively modulated across the recording medium to achieve desired magnetizations at particular domains. According to magnetic field modulation (MFM) recording techniques, the beam is continuously scanned across the recording medium while the magnetic field is selectively modulated to achieve desired magnetization. Alternatively, the beam can be pulsed at a high frequency in coordination with modulation of the magnetic field.

To read the recorded data, the drive applies a lower intensity, plane-polarized read beam to the recording medium. Upon transmission through and/or reflection from the recording medium, the plane-polarized read beam experiences a Kerr rotation in polarization. The Kerr angle of rotation varies as a function of the magnetization of the localized area. An optical detector receives the read beam and translates the Kerr rotation angle into an appropriate bit value.

The amount of data storage capacity for a given magneto-optic disk depends on the spatial density of domains on the disk and the effective recording surface area of the disk. Greater spatial density results in more data per unit surface area. Greater recording surface area naturally results in greater storage capacity for a given spatial density. Recording surface area is limited, however, by disk size. Disk size has been limited in part by drive footprint requirements. Spatial density is limited primarily by the spot size of the drive laser. In other words, spatial density is a function of the ability of the drive to direct a beam to increasingly smaller domains in a consistent manner. Near-field, air-incident

recording, in particular, has the potential to produce extremely small spot sizes using evanescent coupling and the resultant high numerical aperture, thereby providing increased spatial density and data storage capacity.

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SUMMARY

The present invention is directed to a rewritable optical data storage disk having a substrate with an increased thickness that is in a range of approximately 2.3 to 2.6 mm. The increased thickness of the substrate enhances the flatness of the recording disk relative to a recording plane.

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In particular, the increased thickness reduces process-induced surface variations such as warpage and tilt, and provides the disk with increased stiffness to resist deflection during use. The enhanced flatness enables data to be recorded on the disk in a consistent manner with greater spatial densities using techniques such as near-field, air-incident recording. The resulting disk thereby yields greater spatial density and data storage capacity.

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An increased substrate thickness can adversely affect the cost and throughput of disk manufacture, and raise cost and performance issues with respect to disk drives. A substrate thickness in the range of approximately 2.3 to 2.6 mm, however, has been found to provide significantly enhanced flatness, rigidity, and resistance to warpage without excessive cost, throughput, or performance impact.

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Flatness refers to the ability of the incident surface of the disk to maintain a substantially constant position relative to a recording plane on which the drive laser beam is focused. The "incident" surface refers to the surface of the disk through which the beam enters the disk. Deviation of the disk surface from the recording plane can impact the ability of the drive laser to focus on individual domains, particularly for higher spatial densities. This deviation is compounded by the fact that the disk is constantly spinning during use in a drive. In near-field applications, for example, it is expected that drives may rotate a disk at speeds on the order of 2400 to 3600 revolutions per minute (rpm). Consequently, the

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portion of the disk to which the recording head is directed is constantly and rapidly changing.

For near-field, air-incident recording, the size and focal plane of a recording spot is determined primarily by the thickness of the air bearing that separates the recording head and the disk surface. If the position of the disk surface is not uniform, the air bearing thickness can vary. Variation in the air bearing thickness can result in varying focus and spot size across the disk. In particular, the thickness of the air gap determines the amount of radiation received by the recording layer via evanescent coupling. Significant variation in spot size and focus can undermine the ability of the laser to consistently address extremely small domains. Also, excessive surface nonuniformity in the disk can cause acute changes in air bearing thickness for successive domains and resultant loss of tracking. In extreme cases, head crashes, i.e., physical contact of the head with the disk, can result. Thus, unacceptable flatness can lead to disk drive failure.

The surface of the disk can deviate from the recording plane for a number of reasons. The disk fabrication process, for example, can produce warpage and tilt in the disk. With thinner substrates, in particular, the effects of gravity and thermal gradients during the post-fill cooling phase can cause uneven densification and unbalanced thermal stresses at different areas of the disks. For example, once the mold is filled, portions of the disk closest to the mold surface will cool more quickly. The result is disk warpage and tilt.

According to its ordinary meaning, warpage refers to a curvature of the surface of the disk. For a warped disk, tilt can vary with both radial and angular position. Tilt refers to variation of the disk surface flatness relative to an ideal disk plane, and is represented by the following equation:

$$T = (\partial z / \partial r) \hat{i} + (\partial z / r \partial \theta) \hat{j},$$

where r is the radial position of the disk at which tilt is to be measured, z is the variation of the disk in a direction normal to the ideal surface plane as represented as a function $f(r, \theta)$, and θ is the angular position of the disk at which

tilt is to be measured. Thus, warpage and tilt are terms that generally can be used to characterize a deviation of the disk from an ideal disk plane.

In addition to the static variations caused by fabrication, disks having thinner substrates also are susceptible to deflection in response to forces encountered during drive operation. Such forces may result, for example, from inadvertent contact of the head with the disk surface or vibration induced by rotation of the disk. Head crashes can result, in particular, from the application of shock loads when the disk and drive system are bumped or dropped. Also, for flight during operation, the head exerts pressure against the air bearing. This bearing pressure is transferred to the disk, potentially causing deflection.

Deflection generally varies across the surface area of the disk. In particular, deflection during use can be more pronounced at the outer diameter of the disk. The disk is held in a relatively fixed manner by a clutch mechanism associated with the drive. The disk is rotated by a spindle motor associated with the clutch mechanism. The radii of the disk plane form beam members relative to the fixed center of the disk. Each beam member undergoes greater deflection at the outer diameter than at the inner diameter of the disk. Thus, deviation of the disk surface from the recording plane due to deflection can progressively increase from the inner diameter outward. In any event, the disk surface may not conform closely to the recording plane as it is rotated.

Conventional spatial densities of optical disks ordinarily tolerate some degree of focusing error, and therefore are not greatly impacted by flatness variation. Also, to the extent that focusing error is a problem, conventional substrate-incident recording drives typically include closed-loop focus adjustment across the surface of the disk. At higher spatial densities, however, surface deviation can impair the ability of the drive laser to consistently write and read to and from individual domains on the disk. With newer recording techniques such as near-field, air-incident recording, a single disk can potentially bear up to 20 gigabytes (GB) of data over the area of a disk having a diameter in the range of 120 to 135 mm. In this case, the disk must be capable of providing stable magnetized domains on the order of .05 to .06 square μm per domain.

Higher spatial densities may allow very little if any tolerance for focusing error induced by flatness variation. Moreover, the evanescent coupling technique used in near-field, air-incident recording does not allow ready focus adjustment. Rather, the air bearing thickness is the predominant factor in determining the spot size and focal plane of the beam. With significant disk warpage, tilt, and/or deflection, the air bearing thickness can vary to an undesirable degree. As a result, the near-field recording head may suffer from focusing error and/or tracking loss. Accordingly, flatness is a critical condition in a high density recording system such as a near field recording system.

In accordance with the disk of the present invention, the increased thickness of the substrate provides significantly enhanced flatness by increasing the rigidity and weight of the disk. The increased rigidity enables the disk to effectively resist deflection during disk drive operation. The increased weight and resulting gravity of the disk also counteract forces that would otherwise cause significant warpage and tilt during fabrication. Substrate thicknesses that are greater than or equal to approximately 1.5 mm provide the rigidity and weight necessary to achieve desired flatness across the surface area of the disk, i.e., from inner to outer diameter. In the range of approximately 2.3 to 2.6 mm, however, substrate thickness has been found to provide exceptional flatness, rigidity, and warpage resistance.

Substrate thicknesses that are less than approximately 2.3 mm promote decreased cost and time in the fabrication cost, but offer significantly less rigidity and resultant flatness. Substrate thicknesses that are greater than approximately 2.6 mm provide the necessary rigidity and weight, but can increase the cost and time involved in the fabrication process. Disk and drive material cost and excessive post-fill cooling time make substrate thicknesses of less than or equal to 2.6 mm more desirable. Substrate thicknesses greater than 2.6 mm can result in a heavier disk, requiring greater power consumption and higher rated drive motors to rotate the disk. For a given motor, the heavier disk produces excessive inertia and momentum, slowing spin-up and spin-down time and increasing data access time. Thus, fabrication of a disk with optimal

characteristics requires a balancing of the advantages of increasing the substrate thickness with the disadvantages associated with disk manufacture and drive performance. A substrate thickness in the range of approximately 2.3 to 2.6 mm has been found to provide such a tradeoff, and is considered an optimum range given the performance and manufacturing factors considered.

As broadly embodied and described herein, the present invention provides a rewritable optical data storage disk comprising a substrate and a recording layer, wherein the substrate has a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 2.3 mm and less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm.

In another embodiment, the present invention provides an air-incident, magneto-optic disk comprising in order a substrate, a reflective layer, a first dielectric layer, a magneto-optic recording layer, and a second dielectric layer, wherein the substrate has a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 2.3 mm and less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm.

In a further embodiment, the present invention provides a system for air-incident, magneto-optic recording, the system comprising a magneto-optic disk having a substrate and a recording layer, a radiation source oriented to direct a beam of radiation to the recording layer from a side of the disk opposite the substrate, and a detector oriented to receive a reflected component of the beam of radiation and generate a data signal based on the content of the beam of radiation, wherein the substrate has a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 2.3 mm and less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm.

In an added embodiment, the present invention provides an air-incident, magneto-optic disk comprising in order a substrate having a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 2.3 mm and less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm, a reflective layer, a first dielectric layer, a recording layer having a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 6 nm and less than or equal to approximately 15 nm, and a second dielectric layer, wherein the disk has a diameter in the range of approximately 120 to 135 mm and is capable of forming stable magnetizable domains having dimensions of less than approximately .06 square μm .

In another embodiment, the present invention provides a method for making an air-incident, magneto-optic disk comprising forming a substrate having a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 2.3 mm and less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm, forming a reflective layer over the substrate, forming a first dielectric layer over the reflective layer, forming a recording layer over the first dielectric layer, and forming a second dielectric layer over the recording layer.

Other advantages, features, and embodiments of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description and claims.

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DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional diagram of a magneto-optic recording disk having a substrate with increased thickness;

Fig. 2 is a top perspective view of the magneto-optic recording disk of Fig. 1;

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Fig. 3 is a bar graph illustrating variation in process-induced tilt for disks having different substrate thicknesses;

Fig. 4 is a bar graph illustrating normalized variation in deflection for disks having different substrate thicknesses;

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Fig. 5 is a graph illustrating actual variation in deflection for disks having different substrate thicknesses; and

Fig. 6 is a graph illustrating variation in required cooling time for disks molded with different substrate thicknesses.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional diagram of a rewritable optical data storage disk 10 having a substrate 12 with an increased thickness, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. Disk 10 may be, for example, a magneto-optic recording disk. In the example of Fig. 1, disk 10 is configured for air-incident recording applications and includes, in order, substrate 12, a reflective layer 14, a first dielectric layer 16, a recording layer 18, a second dielectric layer 20, and a third dielectric layer 22. Fig. 1 is provided for purposes of illustration

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and is not drawn to scale. The incorporation of more than one recording layer is conceivable for dual-layer applications. Dielectric layers 16, 20 encapsulate recording layer 18 and protect it against reactants. Dielectric layer 22 may be desirable to optically tune disk 10 and is optional. Also, reflective layer 14
5 optionally is included for enhanced optical and thermal response.

Fig. 2 is a top perspective view of disk 10. As shown in Fig. 2, disk 10 is circular and has an inner diameter 23 defined by a center hole 25, and an outer diameter 27 defined by the circumference of the disk. In Fig. 2, reference numeral 29 generally designates the various layers 14, 16, 18, 20, 22 formed
10 over substrate 12. Disk 10 can be configured for a fixed disk drive system, but preferably is removable to facilitate the use of multiple disks with a single drive and disk portability to other drives. For removable use, disk 10 may be housed in a cartridge. Center hole 25 may accommodate a hub or other mechanism for coupling disk 10 to a clutch and spindle motor associated with a drive. The hub
15 may extend through the cartridge. The diameter of circular center hole 25 may be on the order of 15 mm, although other hole diameters are conceivable.

Substrate 12, in accordance with the present invention, has a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 1.5 mm. In particular, substrate 12 preferably has a thickness that is greater than or equal to 2.3 mm and less than or
20 equal to 2.6 mm for optimum performance and ease of use and fabrication. The diameter of disk 10 preferably is greater than or equal to approximately 120 mm and less than or equal to approximately 135 mm. More preferably, disk 10 has a diameter of approximately 130 mm for desired flatness in combination with the thickness dimension of substrate 12. Other disk diameters are conceivable,
25 however, and may benefit from a substrate 12 having an increased thickness as described herein.

With a disk having a diameter of 120 mm to 135 mm, the increased thickness of substrate 12 has been observed to provide enhanced flatness over a range of operating conditions. Substrate 12 provides disk 10 with increased
30 stiffness to resist deflection in response to forces encountered during drive operation. Also, the increased thickness of substrate 12 allows disk 10 to resist

warpage and tilt that otherwise could result during fabrication due to gravity and processing-induced thermal gradients.

The result of the enhanced flatness afforded by substrate 12 is a disk 10 that yields greater spatial density and data storage capacity. In an air-incident, near field recording application, the increased thickness of substrate 12 reduces deviation of the plane of disk 10 from an ideal recording plane on which a beam emitted by a drive head is focused. In this manner, substrate 12 enables the air gap between disk 10 and the head to maintain a more constant thickness for consistent focus and spot size. Substrate 12 also enables enhanced drive reliability by reducing the susceptibility of disk 10 to head crashes.

With further reference to Fig. 1, disk 10 may form part of a near-field, air-incident recording system for magneto-optic data storage. Such a system may include an integrated magnetic head assembly 24 that emits a recording beam 26. The head assembly is oriented to direct beam 26 to recording layer 18 as disk 10 is rotated by a spindle motor at speeds on the order of 2400 to 3600 revolutions per minute. Recording beam 26 heats disk 10 at particular domains in the presence of a magnetic field applied by magnetic head assembly 24. The near-field recording technique makes use of evanescent coupling to direct beam 26 to recording layer 18. The beam can be transmitted, for example, by a solid immersion lens (SIL). An example of a system having a SIL for near-field, air-incident recording of magneto-optic disks is disclosed in United States Patent No. 5,125,750 to Cole et al. The magnetic head assembly 24 can be structurally integrated along with the SIL to form a so-called "flying head."

Recording beam 26 is air-incident in the sense that it does not pass through substrate 12 to reach recording layer 18. Rather, recording beam 26 is incident on recording layer 18 via the air bearing that separates disk 10 from the flying head. The air gap is extremely thin, having a thickness that ordinarily is less than one wavelength of recording beam 26. Beam 26 also may pass through one or more dielectric layers 20, 22 before reaching recording layer 18. As also shown in Fig. 1, readout can be achieved by application of beam 26 to recording layer 18 at a lower intensity. A detector 28 is oriented to receive a reflected

component of the read beam. Detector 28 translates the Kerr rotation angle of the reflected component to an appropriate bit value. This detector 28 also may be structurally integrated with the flying head.

5 The enhanced flatness of disk 10 allows improved conformance of the surface of the disk to the recording plane. In particular, the reduced susceptibility of disk 10 to warpage and tilt, along with improved stiffness for resistance to deflection, allows the air gap between the flying head and the disk to remain substantially constant, at least relative to applicable system tolerances. As a result, the position of head assembly 24 can be readily tuned to produce a
10 desired air gap thickness in a consistent manner. Specifically, the enhanced flatness of disk 10 enables head assembly 24 to be positioned at a substantially constant distance across the entire surface plane of disk 10 without regard to radial position.

In an air-incident construction, the optical characteristics of substrate 12
15 are largely irrelevant. Specifically, because the beam does not enter disk 10 through substrate 12, the optical properties of the substrate have no direct optical effect on performance. In contrast, substrate-incident disks typically require substrates having particular optical properties. Thus, in an air-incident disk, it is conceivable that a wider array of materials may be used to fabricate
20 substrate 12. Also, such materials could be less expensive than higher grade optical materials. For example, substrate 12 can be formed from a variety of materials including thermosets, thermoplastics, metal, or glass. The selected materials can be transparent or opaque. Also, such materials could be selected in part on the basis of the applicable elastic modulus of the material for enhanced
25 rigidity relative to more typical substrate materials for optical disks. For optical recording, however, it is typically desirable to form a physical format on substrate 12 to facilitate optical tracking. Therefore, it may be most desirable to form substrate 12 from a material that can be readily replicated with a physical format in a mold.

30 An example of a particular material that is readily embossable is the high-flow polycarbonate typically used for CD production. Although polycarbonate

in general is a very widely used engineering thermoplastic, this particular class of polycarbonate has been developed for the optical disk market. The ready availability and price of this class of polycarbonate make it attractive for use in substrate 12. This polycarbonate material also provides a number of structural and manufacturing advantages. For example, high-flow polycarbonate has a sufficiently low viscosity to fill the mold without forming flow marks often associated with injection molded products. With an elastic modulus on the order of 345,000 pounds per square inch (psi), this class of polycarbonate is not generally among the stiffest of engineering thermoplastics, but is rigid enough to provide disk 10 with the desired flatness characteristic for substrate thicknesses contemplated in accordance with the present invention. In addition to sufficient rigidity, water uptake in high-flow polycarbonate is relatively low, avoiding significant deformation or environmental degradation problems due to water absorption. Also, this material exhibits a strain-at-failure of over 100 percent, indicating that the material is highly ductile. This characteristic is important for a nano-replicated plastic surface that will be used in an optical disk drive to guide a sub-micron sized laser spot to data on disk 10. Given its acceptable performance over an array of requirements, the high-flow polycarbonate typically used for optical disk substrates provides a suitable material for fabrication of substrate 12.

Substrate 12 preferably is formed as a single, integrally formed piece, but could be constructed from two or more layers bonded together by, for example, adhesive bonding or lamination. For example, two polycarbonate substrates produced from conventional 1.2 mm MO substrate molds could be bonded together to provide a 2.4 mm substrate, which falls within the desired thickness range of approximately 2.3 to 2.6 mm. To reduce the time and complexity of fabrication, however, such a polycarbonate substrate preferably is integrally formed from a single mold as a single, non-layered substrate. The other layers 14, 16, 18, 20, 22 can then be formed over the resulting substrate 12.

Recording layer 18 may comprise a rare earth transition metal alloy such as FeTbCo or FeTbCoTa. Dielectric layers 16, 20, 22 can be formed from any

of a variety of dielectric materials including silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and silicon dioxide. In particular, dielectric layers 16, 20 may comprise silicon carbide for enhanced passivation of recording layer 18, whereas dielectric layer 22 may comprise silicon nitride for desired optical response. Finally, reflective layer 14 may comprise a highly reflective metal such as aluminum chrome alloy. Such a material provides both effective reflectivity and thermal conductivity.

In an exemplary embodiment, the various layers 14, 16, 18, 20, 22 of disk 10 may be dimensioned and constructed as disclosed in PCT publication WO 99/35645 to Aspen et al., entitled "MAGNETO-OPTIC RECORDING MEDIUM WITH REDUCED DEMAGNETIZING FIELD THRESHOLD," having a U.S. priority date of January 6, 1998. For example, reflective layer 14 may be formed from a layer of aluminum chrome alloy (4 weight % chromium in aluminum) having a thickness in a range of less than or equal to approximately 130 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 20 nm, and preferably less than or equal to approximately 60 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 30 nm. The thickness of recording layer 18 preferably is less than or equal to approximately 15 nm. In particular, the thickness of recording layer 18 may be in a range of less than or equal to approximately 15 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 6 nm, and preferably is in a range of less than or equal to approximately 12 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 8 nm. Recording layer 18, in this exemplary embodiment, may be formed from an FeTbCoTa material. In particular, recording layer 18 may have a composition, in atomic weight, of approximately 67%Fe, 23.5% Tb, 8.0% Co, and 1.5% Ta.

First dielectric layer 16 may have a thickness in a range of less than or equal to approximately 60 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 5 nm, and preferably is in a range of less than or equal to approximately 30 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 5 nm. Second dielectric layer 20 may have a thickness in a range of less than or equal to approximately 30 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 5 nm, and preferably is greater than or equal to approximately 20 nm. In this example, first and second dielectric layers 16, 20 may be formed from a silicon carbide-graphite material marketed under

the tradename Hexoloy SG and commercially available from Carborundum, Inc., Amherst, New York, U.S.A. The composition of the "Hexoloy SG" silicon carbide compound has a spectrum indicating the presence of carbon, boron, silicon, nitrogen, and oxygen in detectable concentrations. Using the peak intensities and standard sensitivity factors known in the art, the atomic concentration of this silicon carbide (SiC_x) dielectric is estimated as $\text{Si}(35\%)\text{C}(51\%)\text{B}(7\%)\text{N}(5\%)\text{O}(2\%)$ which yields a value of $x = 0.51/0.35 = 1.47$. Third dielectric layer 22 may have a thickness in a range of less than or equal to approximately 200 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 5 nm, and preferably less than or equal to approximately 50 nm and greater than or equal to approximately 20 nm. Third dielectric layer 22 may be formed from a silicon nitride material. In this example, the silicon nitride may be Si_3N_4 .

According to this embodiment, disk 10 incorporates a substrate 12 having a thickness in the range of approximately 2.3 to 2.6 mm, as described herein, while also incorporating an extremely thin MO recording layer on the order of 6 to 15 nm in thickness. The combination of these features provides a disk 10 having both enhanced flatness characteristics and a reduced demagnetizing field threshold. The flatness characteristic is particularly applicable to disk diameters in the range of greater than or equal to approximately 120 mm and less than or equal to approximately 135 mm. The reduced demagnetizing field threshold is useful with recording techniques, such as magnetic field modulation, that use lower magnetic fields. A disk constructed with the above materials and dimensions has been observed as capable of providing stable magnetized domains on the order of .0525 square μm per domain.

Disk 10 preferably is constructed for air-incident recording. Disk 10 could be adapted for substrate-incident recording, however, by selecting the order in which the various layers are deposited. In particular, for substrate-incident recording, disk 10 could include, in order, substrate 12, a first dielectric layer, a recording layer, a second dielectric layer, and a reflective layer. Such a substrate-incident disk would benefit from the enhanced flatness afforded by the

thickness of substrate 12. At the same time, however, the increased thickness of substrate 12 could cause beam focusing and attenuation problems for existing laser diode sources.

Fig. 3 is a bar graph illustrating variation in process-induced tilt for disks having different substrate thicknesses. Tilt is one of the factors contributing to the overall flatness characteristic of a disk, i.e., the conformance of the beam-incident surface of the disk to the recording plane on which the write beam is focused. The effects of gravity and unbalanced thermal gradients during the post-fill cooling phase can cause uneven densification of different areas of the disks, producing disk warpage and tilt. Tilt refers to the angular variation of the disk surface relative to a plane that is tangential with the center of the disk. Thus, for a warped disk, tilt can vary across the disk radius. As shown in Fig. 3, a number of disk samples having different substrate thicknesses were analyzed to determine tilt in milli-radians (mrad). The samples are represented along the horizontal axis of the graph of Fig. 3, whereas tilt in mrad is shown along the vertical axis.

As indicated in the graph of Fig. 3, a first set of disk samples consisted of ten conventional DVD disks, each having a substrate thickness of 0.6 mm. Each DVD disk was a 4.7 gigabyte (GB) disk having a diameter of 120 mm. Such DVD disks are commercially available from Imation Enterprises Corp., Oakdale, Minnesota, U.S.A. A second set of disk samples consisted of ten conventional MO disks, each having a substrate thickness of 1.2 mm. Each MO disk was a 1.3 GB disk having a diameter of 130 mm. Such MO disks are also commercially available from Imation Enterprises Corp., Oakdale, Minnesota, U.S.A. Finally, the third set of disk samples consisted of ten specially prepared MO disks, each having a substrate thickness of approximately 2 mm in accordance with an embodiment in the present invention. Each of the specially prepared MO disks had a diameter of 130 mm, and conceivably could be used with near-field recording techniques to achieve data storage densities on the order of 10 to 20 GB. The substrate for each of the specially prepared MO disks was molded in manner similar to that used for conventional optical disks. In

particular, each substrate was molded in a mid-sized 30-100 ton injection molding press that has tooling to make a single substrate per cycle.

With reference to Fig. 3, the MO disks having a substrate thickness of approximately 2 mm produced significantly improved tilt characteristics. Tilt was measured as the maximum tilt over a sampling of radial and angular positions along the disk. The tilt measurement was obtained by using a laser-scanned sensor array that logged vertical displacement of the disk surface for a single rotation of the disk. By radially translating the scanner and sensor array, tilt at a full range of radii was mapped. As a result, the disk can be described by a function $f(r, \theta)$, where r is disk radius and θ is angular position. Axial displacement was defined as the maximum absolute value of z or maximum deviation of the disk surface from the testing datum over the entire surface. Axial runout is the largest circumferential peak-to-peak value of z , i.e., $\max(z) - \min(z)$ on a particular radius, found among all radii tested. Tilt is defined as a vector quantity, T , of the first derivative of the function that describes the disk surface, and includes a radial and tangential component. With this background, tilt provides a useful indication of overall disk flatness.

As shown in Fig. 3, whereas the DVD disks and MO disks produced maximum tilt ranging from approximately 5 to 9.5 mrad, the "thick-substrate" MO disks of the present invention produced maximum tilt on the order of 1 to 1.5 mrad. The reduced tilt produced in the disks having a substrate with a thickness of approximately 2 mm is one significant factor in providing improved flatness. Specifically, with lesser tilt, the surface of disk 10 better conforms to the recording plane on which the evanescently coupled beam is focused. In other words, the flatter disk surface contributes to a more consistent air gap thickness between the recording head and the surface of the disk. The air gap thickness determines the focal plane of the beam, and the amount of radiation transmitted by evanescent coupling. By reducing variation in air gap thickness, the write beam can more consistently resolve domains of increasingly smaller size. This feature is particularly useful for the aggressive spatial resolution requirements of near-field recording. With a 130 mm disk, for example, a storage density

requirement of approximately 20 GB will require a spatial resolution of approximately .0525 square microns. Greater storage density requirements in the future will result, of course, in even more aggressive spatial resolutions. Accordingly, elimination of substantial air gap-induced focusing error is a critical performance factor. Following measurement of tilt, the degree of warpage can be characterized in terms of the difference between maximum and minimum tilt over the disk. In light of the significantly reduced maximum tilt measurement obtained from the specially prepared disks, as shown in Fig. 3, it is reasonable to characterize such disks as also exhibiting significantly reduced warpage.

Fig. 4 is a bar graph illustrating normalized variation in deflection of a disk having different substrate thicknesses. Deflection is another significant factor in the overall flatness characteristic of a disk. In particular, the disk can be susceptible to deflection in response to forces encountered during drive operation. Such forces may result, for example, from inadvertent contact of the head with the disk surface or vibration induced by rotation of the disk. Head crashes can result, in particular, from the application of shock loads when the disk and drive system are bumped or dropped. Also, for flight during operation, the head exerts pressure against the air bearing. This bearing pressure is transferred to the disk, and can cause disk deflection. Deflection generally varies across the surface area of the disk. In particular, deflection during use can be more pronounced at the outer diameter of the disk. The disk is held in a relatively fixed manner by a clutch mechanism associated with the drive. This disk is rotated by a spindle motor associated with the clutch mechanism. The radii of the disk plane form beam members relative to the fixed center of the disk. Each beam member undergoes greater deflection at the outer diameter than at the inner diameter of the disk. Thus, deviation of the disk surface from the recording plane can progressively increase from the inner diameter outward. As a result, the disk surface may not conform closely to the recording plane as it is rotated.

The graph of FIG. 4 represents calculations of disk deflection in cantilever loading as a function of the thickness of the substrate of the disk. The

results are normalized against the response of a 2.0 mm thick polymeric substrate. The findings of Fig. 4 are particularly relevant in the case where the disk would respond to a head load at its outer diameter, or in the case where the substrate would respond to a shock load from, e.g. a disk drive system that is dropped. As shown in Fig. 4, by comparing the deflection results for the disk with a 2.5 mm thick substrate to those for a disk with a 2.0 mm thick substrate, it is apparent that a 25% increase in thickness, i.e., 2.0 to 2.5 mm, provides approximately a 50% improvement in stiffness, i.e. 1.0 to 0.5 on the normalized scale. Thus, whereas a substrate having a thickness that is greater than or equal to approximately 1.5 mm can yield significant improvements in flatness, rigidity, and warpage resistance, it has been found that a substrate thickness on the order of 2.3 to 2.6 mm can provide even greater advantages. At the same time, with a substrate thickness on the order of 2.3 to 2.6 mm, impact on manufacturing cost and throughput, as well as drive performance, remains in an acceptable range. Disks having substrates with thicknesses on the order of 2.3 to 2.6 mm have been observed to provide improved tilt characteristics in comparison to disks with substrates having conventional thicknesses.

Fig. 5 is a graph illustrating actual variation in deflection for disks having different substrate thicknesses. The graph of Fig. 5 shows deflection data for several actual disks and substrates, as well as disks and substrates represented by finite element modeling. Specifically, with reference to Fig. 5, deflection data was obtained for the following sets of samples: sample set 1 - bare (uncoated) polycarbonate substrates having thicknesses ranging from approximately 1.24 to 1.52 mm; sample set 2 - coated (with recording layer, reflector, and dielectrics) polycarbonate substrates having thicknesses ranging from approximately 1.24 to 1.52 mm; sample set 5 - bare (uncoated) polycarbonate substrates having thicknesses ranging from approximately 1.95 to 2.1 mm, and sample set 6 - bare (uncoated) polycarbonate substrates having a thickness of approximately 2.5 mm. The polycarbonate substrates in sample sets 1, 2, 5, and 6 were formed from high-flow, CD grade polycarbonate obtained from Mitsubishi Gas & Chemical Co. Deflection data was also modeled for the following sets of

samples analyzed by finite element modeling: sample set 3 - bare (uncoated) polycarbonate substrates having thicknesses ranging from approximately 1.2 to 1.8 mm; and sample set 4 - coated (with recording layer, reflector, and dielectrics) polycarbonate substrates having thicknesses ranging from approximately 1.2 to 1.8 mm.

Each sample, actual and modeled, had a radius of 130 mm. The deflection data was represented as axial displacement in microns (T_m) relative to an initial, unloaded position. To obtain the deflection data, each sample was loaded with a force of approximately 5 grams force (gf) at a radius from disk center of approximately 60 mm. The loading force is approximately equivalent to the air bearing forces expected to be exerted against the disk during operation in an air-incident, near-field recording application. Displacement of the sample at the 60 mm radius was then measured from its initial, unloaded position to the loaded position. This disk was not rotated during measurement. However, this static measurement is believed to provide a reasonable analog to the measurements that would be obtained during rotation. This displacement measurement provided an indication of relative deflection of each sample.

As illustrated by the graph of Fig. 5, the displacement data suggest a rapid decrease in disk deflection as substrate thickness is increased from approximately 1.2 mm to approximately 2.1 mm. In particular, a bare polycarbonate disk having a thickness of approximately 1.24 mm was observed to produce displacement of approximately 62 μm . In contrast, a bare polycarbonate disk having a thickness of approximately 2.0 mm was observed to produce a displacement of approximately 18 μm . With a substrate thickness of approximately 2.5 mm, deflection was even further reduced to approximately 6.7 μm . Thus, a 25% increase in substrate thickness, i.e., 2.0 mm to 2.5 mm, can yield more than a 50% reduction in deflection, i.e., from 18 μm to 6.7 μm .

Based on the data represented in the graph of Fig. 5, it is evident that a disk having a thicker substrate can provide a clear advantage in resisting operationally-induced deflection in the drive. This resistance to deflection, or "stiffness," is critical in ensuring consistent conformance of the incident surface

of the disk to the recording plane. The deflection data also support the theoretical case for a disk substrate of increased thickness. Specifically, according to principles of mechanics, stiffness of a beam member is proportional to the elastic modulus of the material and the width of the beam. Stiffness is also a function, however, of the cube of the thickness. Thus, substrate thickness is the most powerful factor in controlling deflection. In accordance with the present invention, this characteristic of a thicker substrate is exploited to improve the flatness characteristic of the disk, and ultimately contribute to increased spatial density for recording. In particular, greater disk stiffness improves the consistency of air gap thickness across the surface of the disk. More consistent air gap thickness enhances the ability of the drive to focus on increasingly smaller domains on the disk.

Although increased substrate thickness is generally desirable from a disk performance standpoint, it may be constrained by certain size, weight, and fabrication process considerations. Specifically, significantly increased substrate thickness can lead to a disk having excessive size and weight. Excessive size and weight can undermine interests in portability and ergonomics. Also, excessive size and weight can increase the torque, power consumption, and space requirements of the drive. In particular, excessive weight results in a disk having greater inertia and momentum, slowing spin-up and spin-down times and increasing access time by the drive. Further, greater substrate thickness can drive up the cost of materials used in the fabrication process, as well as the process time necessary for disk fabrication. With a polycarbonate or other plastic substrate, for example, the substrate is molded and allowed to cool. With increased thicknesses, the post-fill cooling process may take longer.

Fig. 6 is a graph illustrating variation in cooling time for disks molded with different substrate thicknesses. Fig. 6 shows simple finite-difference results for freezing time for the midline of a disk where one-dimensional (out-of-plane) conduction dominates. The governing equation for one-dimensional transient heat conduction is as follows:

$$dT/dt = \alpha(\partial^2 T / \partial z^2)$$

where T is temperature in Kelvins, t is time, z is thickness dimension, and α is the coefficient of thermal diffusivity. This equation is first order in time and second order in the spatial direction. Consequently, a change in substrate thickness will require an increase in post-fill cooling time that is proportional to the square of the thickness change. In Fig. 6, the equations are solved for conditions appropriate for polycarbonate injected into a mold at 340 degrees C, and held in contact with the metal mold surfaces at 80, 100, and 120 degrees C. As shown in Fig. 6, disk substrate thicknesses on the order of 2 mm are expected to cool to solid state in less than twenty seconds. At substrate thicknesses above 2.5 mm, however, cooling time exceeds twenty seconds and increases at a greater rate with increased thickness.

The key conclusion to be drawn from the data in Fig. 6 is that the required cooling time rises considerably as the substrate thickness is increased above 2.5 mm. Of course, this increased cooling time can reduce fabrication process throughput, possibly requiring additional mold stations and associated capital expenditures for desired production levels. In view of the marked improvements in disk flatness for substrate thicknesses in the range of approximately 2.3 to 2.6 mm, increased cooling times can be tolerated to some degree. At substrate thicknesses in excess of 2.6 mm, however, cooling times increase at an even greater rate while additional gains in flatness are both less pronounced and generally less valuable. Specifically, with reference to the graph of FIG. 5, a flatness on the order of 6 to 8 μm should provide adequate flatness for the spatial resolutions and drive conditions contemplated herein. Accordingly, additional gains in flatness are offset by excessive cooling times, and therefore are generally unjustified. Rather, substrate thicknesses in the range of approximately 2.3 to 2.6 mm are considered optimum given the tradeoff between disk flatness and cooling time.

In view of the deflection data of Figs. 4 and 5, and the process data of Fig. 6, the limits for substrate thickness are generally performance-based on the lower end and process-based on the upper end. The upper end is also influenced by the cost, size, and weight of the disk and drive. Thus, a balance is necessary.

In accordance with the present invention, it is desirable that the substrate have a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 1.5 mm to facilitate adequate stiffness to limit deflection and vibration problems. A substrate having a thickness that is greater than or equal to approximately 1.5 mm is also desirable to avoid significant warpage and tilt. To allow feasible processing time, as well as reasonable cost, size and weight of the disk and drive, however, it is desirable that the thickness of the substrate be less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm. In a preferred embodiment, this balance can be achieved such that the substrate thickness is greater than or equal to approximately 2.3 mm and less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm. With a substrate thickness in this preferred range, satisfactory disk flatness has been observed without producing excessive processing time or significantly driving up the material cost, size, and weight of the disk and drive. This thickness range has been observed to be particularly advantageous for a disk having a diameter in the range of approximately 120 to 135 mm. Given maximum disk and drive size limitations and storage density requirements, this disk diameter range appears most feasible for presently contemplated near field recording applications.

The foregoing detailed description has been provided for a better understanding of the invention and is for exemplary purposes only. Modifications may be apparent to those skilled in the art without deviating from the spirit and scope of the appended claims. For example, although the enhanced flatness provided by the present invention may be particularly desirable for magneto-optic disks useful in near-field, air-incident recording, application to other optical disks such as phase-change, holographic, CD-R, or substrate incident magneto-optic disks is contemplated. For each type of optical disk, enhanced flatness becomes more critical with increased spatial storage densities.

What is claimed is:

1. A rewritable optical data storage disk comprising a substrate and a recording layer, wherein the substrate has a thickness of greater than or equal to approximately 2.3 mm and less than or equal to approximately 2.6 mm.
2. The disk of claim 1, wherein the disk is a magneto-optic disk and the recording layer comprises a magneto-optic recording material.
3. The disk of claim 1, wherein the disk has a diameter of in range of approximately 120 to 135 mm.
4. The disk of claim 1, wherein the substrate comprises a material selected from the group consisting of thermoset, thermoplastic, glass, and metal.
5. The disk of claim 1, wherein the substrate comprises polycarbonate material.
6. The disk of claims 1 or 2, further comprising a reflective layer, a first dielectric layer and a second dielectric layer, wherein the first and second dielectric layers are disposed adjacent opposite sides of the recording layer.
7. The disk of claim 6, wherein the disk is an air-incident disk.
8. The disk of claim 1, wherein the disk is capable of forming stable magnetizable domains having dimensions of less than or equal to approximately .06 square μm .
9. The disk of claim 1, wherein the substrate and the recording layer include a central hole having a diameter of approximately 15 mm.

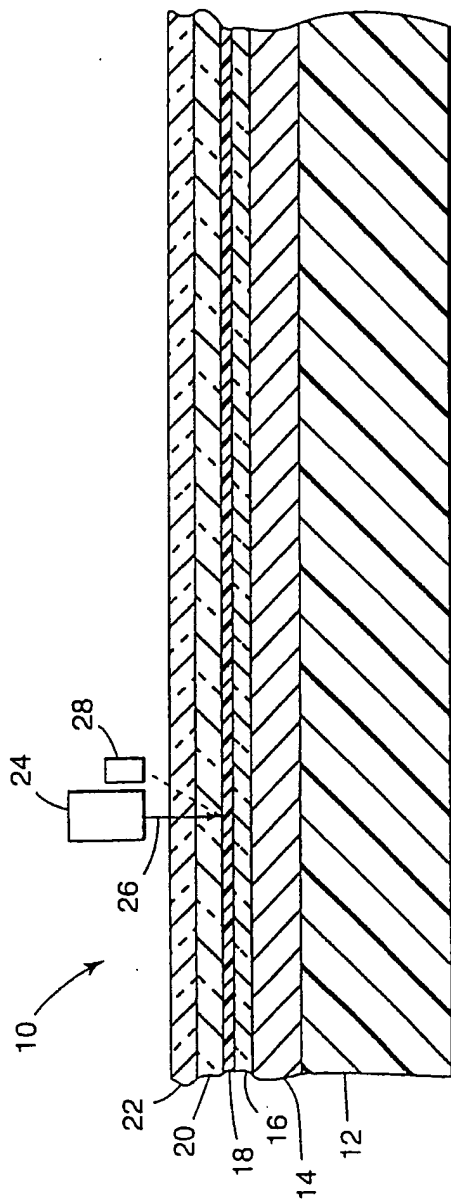


Fig. 1

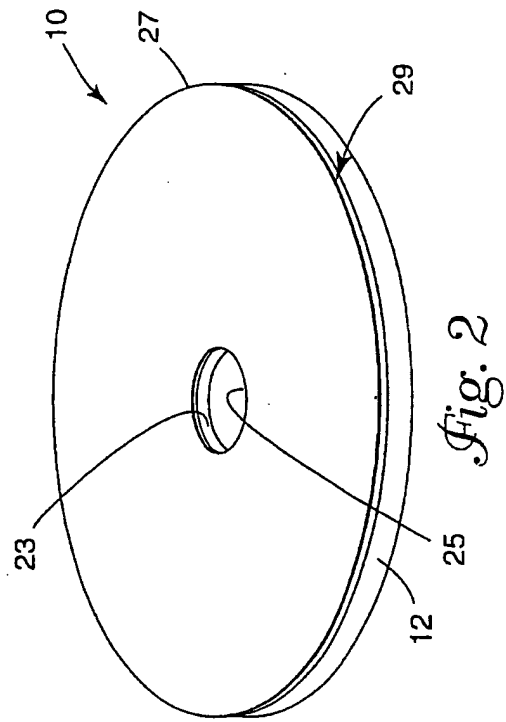


Fig. 2

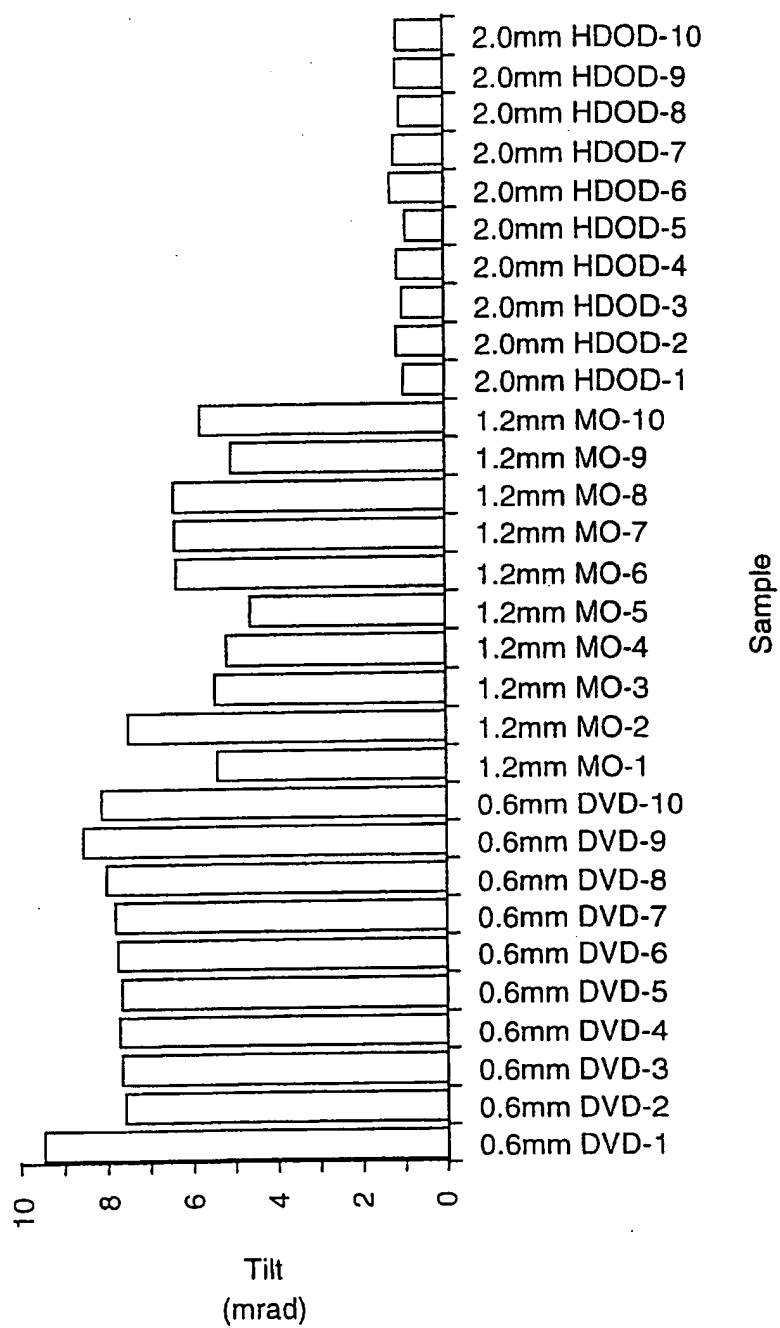
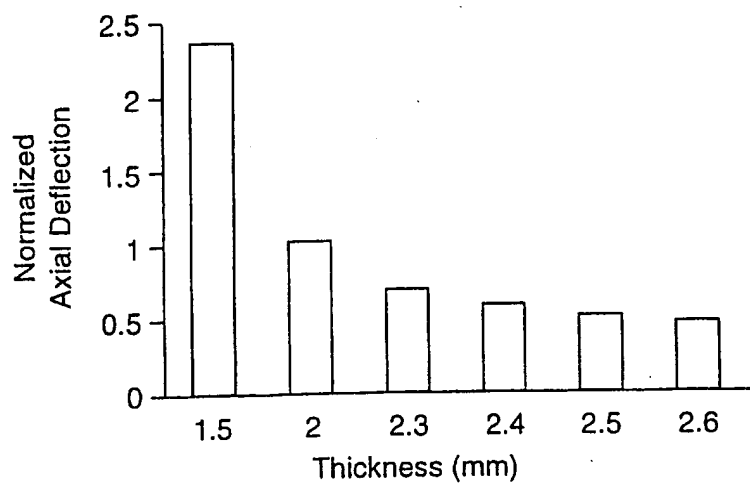
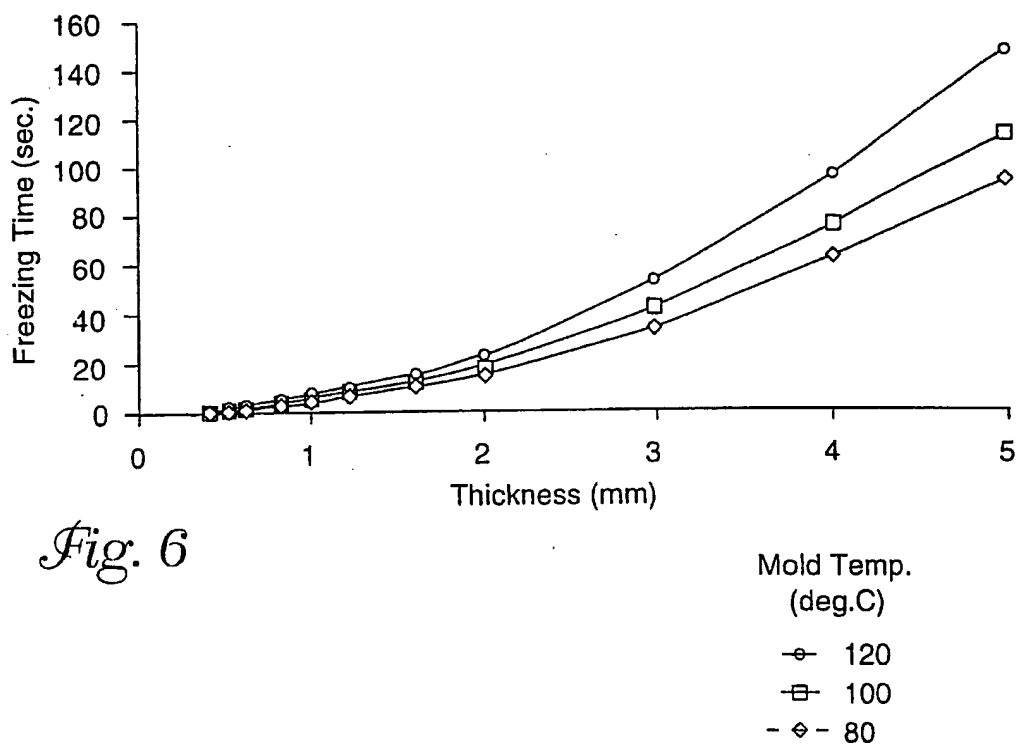
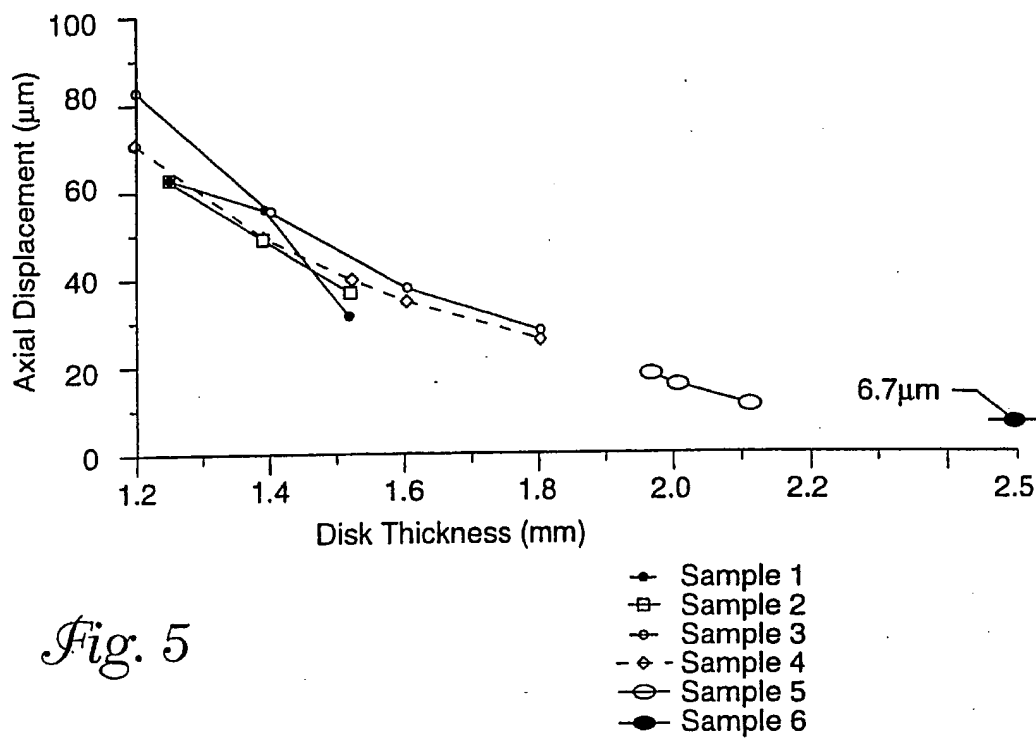


Fig. 3

*Fig. 4*



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US 00/14110

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 G11B7/24

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 G11B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 99 35642 A (IMATION CORP) 15 July 1999 (1999-07-15) the whole document	1-9
X	US 5 510 163 A (SULLIVAN BRIAN T ET AL) 23 April 1996 (1996-04-23) column 4, line 50	1

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

25 July 2000

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/US 00/14110

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO 9935642 A	15-07-1999	US 5972461 A	26-10-1999
US 5510163 A	23-04-1996	CA 2190246 A	23-11-1995
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